

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Budget Estimates Hearing—May 2014

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: Library research
Question: 195
Hansard Reference p 48, 26 May 2014

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 11 July 2014

Senator McKENZIE: So you would agree that the library does prioritise research requests?

Dr Heriot: We do have a prioritising process. For example, things that are needed for chamber debate get the highest priority. That is also reflected in the fact that our *Bills Digests* gets the highest priority; they are integral to our service to the chamber and they are used by multiple members and senators, so they get our No. 1 priority. If someone needs some information for X or they are giving an address in the chamber, we do that sort of prioritising on the run because it is always a juggling event to try and provide the best service we can within the resources available.

Senator McKENZIE: If on notice you could flesh out those prioritisation steps, that would be fabulous.

Answer

The Library actively manages and prioritises research requests in several ways to ensure the best use of available resources to meet client needs in the time available.

The Parliamentary Library's *Statement of Client Services* sets out the eligibility of potential clients of the Library to the range of services available (copy attached). The Statement, which is endorsed by the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library, identifies priorities to be given to particular types of work, and circumstances in which work may need to be renegotiated or refused.

Services are provided to all Senators and Members on an equal basis and are provided in confidence and to agreed deadlines. Priority is given to Chamber-related work and deadlines may have to be renegotiated accordingly.

In the context of the Library's broader work, priority is given in the following order:

1. Bills digests are given the highest priority, consistent with the priority given in the *Statement of Client Services* to chamber-related work.
2. Client requests are given the next highest priority. Again, priority is given to chamber related work.
3. Research publications, including Quick Guides, Chronologies, and FlagPost blog entries, are then worked on when time permits.

In responding to other than simple research requests, researchers would as a matter of routine contact the client to clarify what is required and obtain a clear understanding of the their deadline. In doing so, researchers have regard to: what the information is needed for (with chamber related work given highest priority); what other client requests are already on hand; when the information is needed; and the depth of information or analysis requested. As part of this process, it will be determined whether the request can be met in full or whether there needs to be negotiation over its nature or scope rather than provide poor quality or unreliable information.

In certain circumstances, the Parliamentary Library may refuse a request, 'if time constraints, staffing or resource considerations preclude the acceptance of the request' or if the request relates to private, non-work related or constituent matters (see paragraphs 5 and 36, *Parliamentary Library Statement of Client Services*).

In practice, the Library prefers not to refuse a request, but in some cases where the request is very broad and involves extensive or original research, we endeavour to renegotiate the scope of the request and provide the fullest response we can within the time and resources available.



Governance Paper No. 5.1—Library—Policy—Parliamentary Library Statement of Client Services

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|-----------|---------------------------|----------|--------------|
| Date: | 1 March 2012 | Review: | 1 March 2015 |
| Approved: | Parliamentary Librarian | File no: | 12/2023 |
| Contact: | Director, Client Services | Extn.: | 2512 |

Introduction

- 1 The Parliamentary Library's *Statement of Client Services* sets out the eligibility of potential clients of the Library to the range of services available.
- 2 The Statement serves the dual purposes of making clear to clients what they can expect from the Library and ensuring that the Library's resources are allocated as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- 3 The Statement set out at Attachment A was approved by the Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library on 15 March 2012. It describes the services to Senators and Members and the need for the Library to ensure that its resources are used for parliamentary or representative purposes only.

Dianne Heriot
Parliamentary Librarian

Attachment A

Parliamentary Library Statement of Client Services

Introduction

1 The Parliamentary Library supports the parliamentary process by providing Senators and Members with quality information services, analysis and advice.

2 Services are tailored to meet specific needs using the Parliamentary Library's combination of research and information specialists, collections, networks and access to national and international resources and expertise.

3 Services to clients are described below in priority order.

4 The Joint Standing Committee on the Parliamentary Library endorsed the following *Statement of Client Services* on 15 March 2012.

Senators and Members

5 Services are available to all Senators and Members on an equal basis and are provided in confidence and to agreed deadlines. Priority is given to Chamber-related work and deadlines may have to be renegotiated accordingly.

6 Requests for services may be lodged via telephone, email, fax or in person, either to the Central Enquiry Point (CEP) or directly to the relevant member of the Library staff if known. Complex enquiries should preferably be in writing.

7 To ensure that the Parliamentary Library's resources are used for parliamentary or representational purposes only, Library staff:

- (a) are not able to respond to requests for services from Senators and Members on behalf of constituents or on behalf of community organisations;
- (b) are not able to respond to requests to support Senators' and Members' private interests or study;
- (c) do not engage in legal practice (eg do not do legal work such as provide commercial legal advice or legal advice on individual matters);
- (d) do not provide advice on the circumstances of an individual (eg specific eligibility for programs/visas); and
- (e) may need to clarify or negotiate the nature and scope of requests.

8 Senators and Members are the Library's primary clients and, when engaged in parliamentary or representational duties, have access to:

- (a) the Library's collections, for reference and loans;
- (b) information services;
- (c) tailored analysis and advice (oral or written);

- (d) the Library's publications, lectures and seminars;
- (e) training in and assistance with self-help services;
- (f) library databases through interfaces including ParlInfo, Summon and the web;
- (g) alerting services including *What's New from the Parliamentary Library* and Alerts from ParlInfo;
- (h) inter-library loans;
- (i) copying of material from Library collections (not entire newspaper files); and
- (j) radio and television programs recorded by the Library.

9 Senators and Members may also request that the Library acquire material for the collection. The policy on acquisitions is described in *Governance Paper No. 5.3—Parliamentary Library Collection Development Policy*.

10 In addition to the services available to Senators and Members, Presiding Officers may request assistance with writing speeches addressed to delegations to Parliament.

Staff

11 The staff of Senators and Members have the same access to services as Senators and Members, but only when undertaking work on behalf of a Senator or Member. Senators and Members will be held responsible for requests and loans made in their name.

12 The staff of parliamentary committees have the same access to services as the staff of Senators and Members when undertaking work on behalf of their committee.

13 The staff of parliamentary departments have the same access to services as the staff of Senators and Members when undertaking official duties.

14 Library staff are not able to respond to requests to support the private interests or study of any staff.

The Governor-General

15 The Governor-General has the same access to services as Senators and Members while serving. Former Governors-General are only able to access public services.

Former Senators and Members, and Senators elect

16 Former Senators and Members, and Senators elect, when visiting Parliament House have access to:

- (a) the Library's collections for reference and loans; and
- (b) the Library's publications, lectures and seminars.

- 17 When not in Canberra, they have access to the Library's publications and online services that are available freely through the Internet.
- 18 Former Senators and Members, and Senators elect, are not provided with:
- (a) copies of articles, books, transcripts or newspaper clippings except those which are freely available through ParlInfo Search;
 - (b) access to electronic products including journals and databases to which the Library subscribes;
 - (c) access to the radio and television programs recorded by the Library; and
 - (d) commissioned research services.
- 19 The limitations on access are because:
- (a) the provisions available to the Parliamentary Library to make copies for members of Parliament (sections 48A and 108A of the Copyright Act 1968) only apply to serving Senators and Members; and
 - (b) licenses for electronic resources do not cover use by former Senators and Members, and Senators elect.
- 20 Former Presiding Officers have the same entitlements as other former Senators and Members.

Former Prime Ministers

21 In addition to the services available to former Members, former Prime Ministers and their staff have access to tailored analysis and advice for activities relating to their role as former Prime Ministers.

Parliamentary Interns

22 Parliamentary Interns have access to library services when they are assisting the work of a Senator or Member, but this does not extend to their parliamentary study project. In relation to their individual research project they only have access to:

- (a) Library staff for advice on researching their project;
- (b) the Library's collections (but not inter-library loans), and staff on the Central Enquiry Point, for reference and loans (loans for one week and with a limit of four items); and
- (c) Vital Issues Seminars and Parliamentary Library Lectures.

Members of the Press Gallery

23 Members of the Press Gallery may enter designated areas of the Library, namely the Central Enquiry Point area and the Ground Floor Reading Room.

24 Services provided to the Press Gallery are limited to:

- (a) use of the Library's collections (particularly newspapers in the Ground Floor Newspaper Room);
- (b) loans (subject to immediate recall); and
- (c) access to the hard copy Information Files (covering the period until 2000).

Members of other Parliaments

25 Members of other parliaments, when visiting Parliament House, have access to:

- (a) staff at the Central Enquiry Point for basic information enquiries;
- (b) the Library's collections; and
- (c) the Library's publications, lectures and seminars.

Immediate family of serving Senators and Members

26 Immediate family of serving Senators and Members have access to:

- (a) the Library's collection;
- (b) loans; and
- (c) attendance at seminars and lectures.

Other Parliamentary Libraries

27 Parliamentary Libraries, in recognition of reciprocal services, have access to:

- (a) staff at the Central Enquiry Point for basic information enquiries;
- (b) analysis and policy advice (oral briefings and available research papers);
- (c) Library publications, lectures and seminars;
- (d) loans;
- (e) copies of material in the Library's databases in ParlInfo (subject to the *Copyright Act 1968*);
- (f) copies of previously prepared or acquired transcripts of radio and television broadcasts; and
copies of multimedia material recorded by the Library (subject to the *Copyright Act 1968*).

Commonwealth departments and agencies, and Embassies

28 Commonwealth departments and agencies, and Embassies should use their libraries for information and access to material in the Parliamentary

Library's collection via inter-library loan. In recognition of reciprocal services, they can submit basic, quick information enquiries.

Other Libraries

29 Other Libraries, in recognition of reciprocal services, have access to loans.

General public

30 Members of the general public have access to the Library's publications through the Internet.

31 Members of the public, including constituents, family or friends of parliamentary staff and temporary or Commonwealth Officer Parliament House pass holders, are not clients of the Parliamentary Library and are not entitled to access the collection or services.

General Conditions of Use of the Collections and Services

32 Except for some inter-library loans and items in high demand, loans are for one month and subject to a limit of 20 items at a time. The Library will suspend borrowing privileges if no response is received to a second phone call requesting the return of overdue items. Some of the Library's collections are not for loan and some inter-library loans must be used, at the request of the lending library, only in the Parliamentary Library.

33 Some client groups have restricted loan privileges and these are noted above. When an individual is no longer a member of one of the client groups outlined above all outstanding loans must be returned. Lost or damaged items must be replaced or repaired (either directly by the client or indirectly through payment to the Parliamentary Library).

34 In responding to client requests, photocopying and multimedia copying will be provided in accordance with section 48A of the *Copyright Act 1968*:

The copyright of a work is not infringed by anything done, for the sole purpose of assisting a person who is a member of a Parliament in the performance of the person's duties as such a member, by an authorized officer of a library, being a library the principal purpose of which is to provide library services for members of that Parliament.

35 An introduction to the Library is available at <http://library>. A list of staff expertise and contact information is also available on the Library's intranet and is updated regularly.

36 The Parliamentary Library may refuse a request:

- (a) if the client is unable to demonstrate that the request is legitimate in the terms of this Statement of Client Services;
- (b) if time constraints, staffing or resource considerations preclude the acceptance of the request.

37 The Parliamentary Library encourages feedback from clients. *Governance Paper No. 5.17—Parliamentary Library feedback* outlines the commitment to and process of dealing with feedback.

Enquiries regarding the Statement may be made to:

The Parliamentary Librarian
Parliamentary Library
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Ph: (02) 6277 7102
Fax: (02) 6277 2403